

Hele's School

A great place to learn. A great place to grow.



13 September 2019

Dear Parent/Carer of Year 7,

I felt it timely to write, given that Year 7 students have now completed their first full week with us, to pass on a few thoughts and reflections.

Open Evening support: A resounding 'thank you' to all those wonderful Year 7 students who helped out at Wednesday night's Year 6 Open Evening! We were overwhelmed by just how many Year 7s thought nothing of extending their school day to support subject areas and the SEND department and to talk with prospective students and parents about how they have settled into their new school. Without exception, our helpers were superb ambassadors for Team Hele's, and we received some lovely feedback from adults and children alike. Well done, Year 7, it's hard to believe we are only one week into secondary school! Thank you also to Parents/Carers who supported their child to take part in this important event for the school.

Support for Year 7: Starting secondary school comes with its challenges, as children and parents may well have found out over the past week! Moving around a large and busy site and having lessons in different classrooms and with different teachers can be a little overwhelming, but we are pleased that the vast majority of Year 7 have settled quickly into the new routines and are now finding their way around the building unaided.

Please do alert us to any concerns or worries you may have if you feel your child is finding the transition difficult, no matter how small, so that we can ensure your child is fully supported. Mrs Crosley (Head of Year 7), Mrs Keen (Pastoral Support Manager for Year 7) and our Year 7 Tutors provide an important source of support, advice and encouragement, and our strong team of Year 10 Mentors have been trained specifically to be a listening ear to Year 7.

Good organisation is probably the biggest challenge faced by many new students, and the first few weeks of September are usually a busy time for Tutors and Reception staff as they try to match lost and forgotten items of uniform, equipment or sports kit with their rightful owners! It is one of the most challenging aspects of transition, needing to get into a routine of getting equipment for learning out and packing away. It is very easy to leave or mislay a piece of equipment or even a bag, which is why it is crucial equipment, bags, clothing is named. Should a student lose something, then (after checking the classrooms they have been in) they should report to Reception to see if any lost property is handed in. Sometimes, equipment or uniform may not be handed in immediately as it is usually the cleaners or caretakers who take things to Reception after school if they come across left items. In virtually every case, missing equipment or uniform does turn up.

Mobile phones: I'm pleased to say that those Year 7 students who own a mobile phone have been respectful of our school ruling on mobiles. Whilst we do not actively encourage mobiles, we are realistic enough to realise that they may provide an important point of communication with parents on the way to and from School. We therefore state that mobiles are allowed but they MUST be switched off and kept out of sight in blazer pockets between the hours of 8.30am and 3.00pm, including break and lunchtime. In short, if they are out and seen, then they will be confiscated (until the end of the day). Further information can be found in appendix 3 of our Behaviour Policy, on the School website. Please be mindful, that mobiles brought to School are entirely at the owner's risk and our School insurance does not cover them if they lost, damaged or stolen.

Principal: Justine Mason

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Lockers: Several parents have asked whether the School could invest in lockers to enable equipment to be left in a central place. This is a question that is often asked by new parents and students, but not only do we not have the space for lockers (whether that be 240 for Year 7 or 1280 for the whole school), but the site is so spread out and there would be no central place that lockers could be placed that wouldn't impact negatively on teaching and learning as students wasted time going from classrooms to lockers and back again several times in a day. Besides those reasons, and more that I haven't cited, we believe it is important to teach responsibility for belongings and good organisation too, so we can prepare our young people for life. I'm sorry, but lockers are not and will not be part of our provision in the near future. That said, I'm always willing to review our policies and practice with parents and students, and perhaps this might be a good discussion point for a future Parent Barometer Group meeting? I shall add it to the agenda items to be considered this academic year.

Students should keep their bags with them at all times, unless otherwise stated for health and safety reasons. They are allowed to take them into the Dining Hall at break and lunchtime and to all classrooms. However, they cannot take them into Technology rooms for health and safety reasons or the Library. Racks or hooks are provided immediately outside these rooms, and those areas are covered by CCTV. Likewise, in PE lessons bags must be left in the locked changing rooms. Whilst instances of theft are extremely rare at Hele's, students are advised not to leave anything valuable in their bags if they are unattended, especially items such as mobile phones. Your support in reinforcing this message to your child is appreciated.

Class Charts: after being alerted of some difficulties accessing Class Charts at the start of the week, passwords were reissued to all students and parents. I do hope that everyone is able to access the app now and keep track of attendance, behaviour points and homework. Please contact your child's Tutor if you are having any difficulties so they may be resolved swiftly.

Finally: to say we have been impressed with Year 7 is an understatement; genuinely! Staff have commented at how our new students are wearing their uniform with pride, are enthusiastically taking part in their learning within and beyond the classroom and are a polite, respectful and happy group of young people. Please congratulate your child on making a fantastic start to their new school; week 1 done, just the 7 years to go!

Wishing you all the best for the weekend.

Best wishes,

Justine Mason

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